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ABSTRACT

In 1984-85 the Attendance Improvement Dropout Prevention (AIDP) Program was conducted in 32 New York City community school districts. A total of 32,387 students in kindergarten through grade 9 participated. Across all districts, 66 percent of the program students met the suggested criterion of 24 or more absences in 1983-84; and an additional 6.4 percent of the students were long-term absentees (LTA). Almost half were overage for their grade. The numbers of students targeted in districts and the characteristics of district populations varied considerably. AIDP funds enabled school districts to provide a combination of incentives and services to students, including counseling, family outreach, referrals to outside agencies, and attendance monitoring. Some apparently successful program features were: a clearly defined procedure for selecting students; a multidisciplinary team approach; active involvement by program administrators and district staff; competent and energetic staff; regularly scheduled staff development activities; immediate follow-up on student absence; and individualized attention to students on a regular basis. The greatest weakness was that the extraordinary effort required to get LTA students to return to school detracted from the more productive efforts with other students. The average daily attendance of program students improved in all but one district. Program areas in need of improvement include the program policy, staffing, and student selection. Statistical data on student attendance are presented in 15 tables. (KH)

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ED285926

Final Evaluation of the
1984-85 Community School District
Attendance Improvement/Dropout
Prevention Program

OEA Evaluation Report

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O.E.A. EVALUATION REPORT
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March, 1986

Final Evaluation of the 1984-85 Community School District Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention Program

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A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This final report examines the 1984-85 Attendance Improvement Dropout Prevention (A.I.D.P.) Program in the 32 New York City community school districts (C.S.D.'s). It presents the number and characteristics of students who participated in the program and the range of services they received. It also presents analyses of 1983-84 and 1984-85 attendance data for A.I.D.P. students and schools, and identifies issues raised by these findings. Data were obtained from attendance rosters distributed to each of the 32 C.S.D.'s in November, 1984 and in May, 1985; interviews with district and program staff; and observations of selected program activities.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

The 32 C.S.D.'s targeted a total of 32,387 students for the A.I.D.P. Program. Program students were in kindergarten through ninth grade, with the largest percentage in grades seven and eight. Across all districts, 66 percent of the program students met the suggested criterion of 24 or more absences in 1983-84; an additional 6.4 percent of the program students were long-term absentees (L.T.A.'s), i.e., they had been absent 75 or more days in 1983-84. Almost half (45.9 percent) were overage for their grade. The numbers of students targeted in districts and the characteristics of district populations varied considerably.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

A.I.D.P. funds enabled school districts to provide a combination of services to students. Nearly all districts provided students with counseling, family outreach, referrals to outside agencies, and attendance monitoring. Some districts used an automated dialing machine to reach the homes of absent students. Roughly half of the districts provided supplementary educational services in the form of remedial or enrichment classes, career/vocational programs such as work study, and alternative schools or programs such as in-school suspension.

Many districts also used incentives such as prizes, trips, and parties to encourage students to attend school. District and school programs often incorporated a number of services into an overall attendance improvement strategy, such as the teacher ombudsman model, the pupil personnel team, and school-community agency collaborations.

Certain program designs and strategies more than others appeared to contribute to successful implementation of the A.I.D.P. Program. Some apparently successful program features included:

- a clearly defined procedure for selecting students;
- a multidisciplinary team approach (e.g. pupil personnel team);

- active involvement by program administrators and district staff;
- competent and energetic staff;
- regularly scheduled staff development activities;
- immediate follow-up on student absence; and
- individualized attention to students on a regularly scheduled basis.

Staff mentioned some program weaknesses. Many felt that despite positive attendance outcomes, the extraordinary effort required to get the L.T.A. student to return to school detracted from more productive efforts with other students. Other weaknesses that were mentioned by staff included:

- delays in implementation caused by lack of approval of program plans;
- insufficient staff, primarily in the areas of guidance and family outreach;
- insufficient staff training; and
- coordination difficulties among A.I.D.P. staff and between A.I.D.P. and other school staff.

CHANGES IN ATTENDANCE RATES

Analyses of 1983-84 and 1984-85 attendance yielded several findings.

- The average daily attendance of elementary school students included in the program improved in all but one district. The overall gain from 1983-84 to 1984-85 was 3.6 percentage points (from 80.4 to 84.0).
- In contrast to elementary students, the attendance of A.I.D.P. pupils in middle schools declined an average of 2.7 points (from 79.1 to 76.4 percent). Decreases occurred in all but three of the 32 community school districts.
- Aggregate attendance of all students in A.I.D.P. schools improved from 1983-84 in both elementary (.9 points) and middle schools (.6 points). The increase in elementary A.I.D.P. schools parallels that of elementary A.I.D.P. target students; the increase in A.I.D.P. middle schools contrasts with the decrease in the attendance of A.I.D.P. middle school students.

- Students overage for their grade showed greater declines in attendance than those of both their age and grade peers. This was especially true among middle school students. However, the inclusion of overage students does not explain the decline in middle school students' attendance, since students on-age for their grade also had attendance in 1984-85 that was poorer than the prior school year.

- L.T.A. students showed the greatest gains of any subgroup analyzed. However, their average attendance in 1984-85 was still below that which defines a student as a long-term absentee (59.5 percent).

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

Analyses of attendance and implementation data suggest a number of issues that need to be examined during future planning of this program. Some have been taken into account in the revised 1985-86 program guidelines that were issued prior to this report. Others remain to be addressed.

Program Plan

Districts and schools need to make attendance improvement a matter of school policy, drawing upon all available resources within the school, district, and community.

Staffing

The coordinator of the attendance improvement program should have both management and leadership skills as well as experience in guidance and family outreach.

Student Selection

Program participants should be selected according to criteria outlined by the State Education Department in 1984-85, with additional attention paid to students in three categories: those with emerging attendance problems, students overage for their grade, and students entering middle schools.

In view of the fact that the A.I.D.P. Program appeared to increase elementary school students' attendance, early intervention may be key to attendance improvement and dropout prevention. Clearly, however, middle school students need further attention and intensive intervention before their attendance objectives are achieved.

Attendance Outreach

Attendance outreach efforts would be improved by several measures. For example, programs should be discouraged from having separate staff for attendance record-keeping and follow-up. Students' homes should be contacted the first day that the child is not in school. Telephone calls and home visits should be made, whenever possible, by a staff member with whom the student has an established relationship (e.g. teacher ombudsman). Class cutting should be monitored and followed up on a regular basis.

FOCUS OF FUTURE EVALUATIONS

Future evaluations of this program need to address a number of concerns. These include:

- What indicators reliably predict future chronic truancy?
- What is the length of intervention needed to sustain improved attendance of at-risk students?
- What needs do L.T.A. students have that are not being addressed by this program?
- How can communication between middle and high schools and elementary and middle schools be improved to ease the transition of new school entrants?
- Once returned to school, do at-risk students also attend classes regularly?
- With improved attendance, is there a concomitant increase in students' achievement?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Background	1
	Evaluation Procedures	1
	Overview of the Report	2
II.	SELECTION CRITERIA AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION	3
	Selection Criteria	3
	Student Participants	4
III.	PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION	11
	Types of Activities	11
	Observations and Findings	14
	Matching A.I.D.P. Services to Student Needs	18
IV.	CHANGES IN ATTENDANCE RATES	22
	Overview of the Analyses	22
	Changes in A.I.D.P. Students' Attendance from 1983-84 to 1984-85	22
	School-Wide Attendance in A.I.D.P. Schools	35
V.	ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED	39
	Patterns of Attendance	39
	Program Design and Implementation	40
	Focus of Future Evaluations	46
APPENDIX:	Changes in Attendance of Under-, On-, and Overage A.I.D.P. Students in First Through Ninth Grades	48

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	Reasons for Selecting A.I.D.P. Students for Program Participation (as Reported by Program Staff) by Rate of Absence	5
2	Grade Distribution of Target Population	6
3	School Levels of A.I.D.P. Target Students by Community School District	8
4	Absence Rates of A.I.D.P. Students	9
5	Number of Overage A.I.D.P. Students in Each Community School District	10
6	Services Provided by Selection Category	20
7	Changes in Attendance of All A.I.D.P. Students By District	23
8	Changes in Attendance of All Elementary School A.I.D.P. Students in Each District	24
9	Changes in Attendance of All Middle School A.I.D.P. Students in Each District	26
10	Changes in Attendance of Elementary School A.I.D.P. Students who were Absent at Least 24 days in 1983-84	28
11	Changes in Attendance of Middle Schools A.I.D.P. Students who were Absent at Least 24 Days in 1983-84	30
12	Changes in Attendance of A.I.D.P. Students Under-, On, or Overage for Their Grade (All Students)	31
13	Changes in Attendance of A.I.D.P. Students Absent 24 or More Days in 1983-84 who were Under-, On, or Overage for Their Grade	33
14	Changes in Attendance of Long-Term Absentee (L.T.A.) Students from 1983-84 to 1984-85 (A.I.D.P. Schools)	34
15	Changes in Attendance from 1983-84 to 1984-85 in All A.I.D.P. Schools	36

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
16	Changes in Attendance from 1983-84 to 1984-85 in All A.I.D.P. Elementary Schools	37
17	Changes in Attendance from 1983-84 to 1984-85 in All A.I.D.P. Middle Schools	38

I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In 1984-85, the New York State Legislature provided $12.6 million to New York City's 32 community school districts (C.S.D.'s) so they could establish the Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention (A.I.D.P.) Program. This report presents the final evaluation of the first year's efforts in the community school districts.

An interim report of the Office of Educational Assessment (O.E.A.) presented information on the number of students targeted for participation, described specific services that were developed, and identified problems that arose during initial implementation. This final evaluation examines city-wide program implementation in greater depth, addresses related issues that were raised in the mid-year O.E.A. report, and provides analyses of attendance data.

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

The Office of Educational Assessment (O.E.A.) distributed student rosters to each of the 32 districts in November, 1984 and again in May, 1985 requesting the number of targeted students, the reasons for their selection, and the services that were provided to them. In addition, O.E.A. field staff gathered implementation data at 31 of the 32 districts during the period between May 1 through June 10, 1985. They conducted interviews with 31 district A.I.D.P. coordinators;* 35 principals,

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*One district coordinator declined to be interviewed.

assistant principals, or A.I.D.P. site coordinators; and 42 staff members including guidance counselors, teachers, school aides, family workers, classroom paraprofessionals, attendance aides, and social workers. Interviews elicited the following information:

- characteristics of participating students;
- the framework in which services were provided;
- the scope and intensity of program services;
- coordination of program and non-program efforts to serve students; and
- strengths and weaknesses of the program in its first year of operation.

Also, field staff visited 22 schools to observe 25 program activities including: nine instructional activities; five group guidance sessions; one combination group guidance/instruction activity; four staff meetings focusing on program planning and/or staff development; one cultural enrichment activity; five individual student counseling sessions; and one parent conference.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

Chapter II of this report provides data on the numbers of student participants, their reasons for selection, and salient characteristics. Chapter III reviews the implementation of the program and the range of services provided. Chapter IV contains analyses of 1983-84 and 1984-85 attendance data for A.I.D.P. students and schools. The final chapter, Chapter V, identifies issues raised by these findings, some of which have been incorporated into plans and guidelines for the 1985-86 A.I.D.P. program.

II. SELECTION CRITERIA AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION

SELECTION CRITERIA

The State Education Department (S.E.D.) recommended that student selection focus on six characteristics:

- erratic attendance based on an excessive number of unexcused absences during the 1983-84 school year or a poor historical attendance profile;
- academic record that demonstrates a measurable decline in achievement over a period of several years or a failure in two or more subjects two years in a row;
- identification for and/or participation in remedial programs;
- adjustment, behavior, or personal problems (i.e., lack of motivation, feelings of alienation, disruptive behavior, withdrawal, or isolation);
- demonstrated difficulty in English language comprehension underlying academic failure, poor attendance, or behavioral adjustment problems; and
- overage for grade.

The New York City Board of Education specifically stipulated five of these criteria (overage for grade was not included) to guide school districts in student selection. Chancellor's Special Circular No. 16 (1983-84) included the suggestion that an erratic attendance history be defined by districts as absences of 24 or more days "during each of two successive school years or an overall poor attendance profile throughout [the student's] school history."

STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

Reasons for Participation

C.S.D.'s targeted a total of 32,287 students for the 1984-85 A.I.D.P. Program. Attendance data for 1983-84, which were reported for 28,231 (87.4 percent) students, showed that a majority (66 percent) were absent 24 or more times. (See Table 1.)

To shed further light on student selection, staff were asked to indicate why students were selected for the program. The reason given most frequently was poor attendance; 24,793 students (87.8 percent) were selected because of an attendance problem; 42.8 percent of the program students were selected because of academic difficulties, independent from or in addition to their poor attendance.

Staff reported that over half (59.1 percent) of the 9,596 students who were absent fewer than 24 times in 1983-84 did have attendance problems. These attendance problems included poor attendance in 1984-85 (the project year), frequent lateness, and class cutting. Also, nearly one-half (46.9 percent) of the students in this group were included because of academic difficulties.

Characteristics of District Target Populations

Students in the 1984-85 A.I.D.P. Program came from all grades, kindergarten through grade nine. (See Table 2.) Approximately one-fifth came from the early elementary grades, kindergarten through grade three. Two-fifths of the students in the program were in seventh (20.7 percent) or eighth (22.2 percent) grades. The total number of students

TABLE 1

Reasons for Selecting A.I.D.P. Students for Program Participation (as Reported by Program Staff) by Rate of Absence

Stated Reason for Selection	1983-84 Attendance: 24 or More Absences (n=18,635) Percent	1983-84 Attendance: Fewer than 24 Absences (n=9,596) Percent	All Students (a) (N=28,231) Percent
Attendance	88.7	59.1	87.8
Academic	34.4	46.9	42.8
Behavior/ Adjustment	19.6	28.1	25.1
Health	8.3	5.2	8.2
Language	3.9	4.3	5.0
Overage (b)	9.4	5.6	8.7

NOTE. Percentages are based on the number of students in each attendance category as shown by column headings. Since students could be selected for more than one reason, percentages sum to more than 100.

(a) This N is the total number of students targeted for the program for whom attendance data were available. Attendance data were not provided for the other 4,056 (12.6 percent) target students, of whom 64.0 percent were reported to have an attendance problem; 29.0 percent had an academic problem; 18.5 percent had a behavior or adjustment problem; 6.4 percent had a health problem; 6.6 percent had a language problem; and 3.9 percent were overage for their grade. Data were not provided as to the reasons for selection of 1,092 students; 422 of these students did not meet the eligibility criterion of 24 or more absences in 1983-84.

(b) Although only 2,459 students (8.7 percent) were reported selected because they were overage for their grade, in fact, 14,829 (45.9 percent) of the students were at least one year overage for their grade.

TABLE 2

Grade Distribution of Target Population

Grade	n	Percent
K	282	< 0.1
1	2,240	6.9
2	2,642	8.2
3	2,421	7.5
4	2,700	8.4
5	2,335	7.2
6	3,288	10.2
7	6,507	20.2
8	6,983	21.6
9	2,087	6.5
Unknown	802	2.5
Total	32,287	100.0

targeted in each district ranged from only 190 (C.S.D. 12) to as many as 5,311 (C.S.D. 17). (See Table 3.)

The number of schools targeted in each district ranged from three to 29. Every district targeted middle school students; 24 districts also included elementary school students. In ten of the latter districts, elementary school students comprised the majority of students served. Overall, 54.8 percent of the students were in middle schools and 45.2 percent of the students were in elementary schools.

In 22 districts, the majority of the targeted students for whom data were available had been absent at least 24 days in 1983-84. (See Table 4.) The range by district was from a low of 28.1 percent (C.S.D. 18) to a high of 87.6 percent (C.S.D. 5). Some of the A.I.D.P. students absent 24 or more days in 1983-84 actually met the criterion for long-term absentees (L.T.A.'s), defined as 75 or more absences during the school year. At least 6.4 percent of the A.I.D.P. students fell into this category. The percentage of L.T.A. students in each district's target population ranged from 1.5 (C.S.D. 17) to 23.9 percent (C.S.D. 5).

In 12 districts, more than one-half of the students were overage for their grade by at least one year. Across all districts, 14,829 students (45.9 percent) were overage (see Table 5) although only 2,469 students (8.7 percent) were selected specifically for that reason. (Compare Tables 1 and 5.) The proportion of overage students in each district ranged from 20.8 (C.S.D. 26) to 76.4 percent (C.S.D. 19).

TABLE 3

School Levels of A.I.D.P. Target Students
by Community School District

District	n	Number of Schools	Percentage of A.I.D.P. Students	
			In an Elementary School	In a Middle School (a)
1	515	10	53.6	46.4
2	398	6	14.6	85.4
3	642	11	31.8	68.2
4	383	3	0.0	100.0
5	342	9	13.5	86.5
6	1,821	15	69.7	30.3
7	548	7	40.3	59.7
8	3,483	27	56.9	43.1
9	1,082	29	71.0	29.0
10	1,399	29	77.5	22.5
11	642	13	49.5	50.5
12	190	5	0.0	100.0
13	347	8	39.5	60.5
14	737	15	24.4	75.6
15	774	10	80.7	19.3
16	256	3	0.0	100.0
17	5,162	21	67.3	32.7
18	812	9	84.5	15.5
19	228	8	33.3	66.7
20	1,689	28	36.1	63.9
21	316	7	0.0	100.0
22	985	5	0.0	100.0
23	719	6	7.4	92.6
24	1,148	19	45.5	54.5
25	651	15	8.3	91.7
26	327	15	45.3	54.7
27	510	6	0.0	100.0
28	694	10	37.6	62.4
29	2,414	10	29.5	70.5
30	688	5	0.0	100.0
31	1,058	7	0.0	100.0
32	605	5	84.8	15.2
Total	31,565	376	45.2	54.8

NOTE. This table excludes 722 students for whom school level data were missing. Of these students, no data were reported for a total of 424 students distributed among C.S.D.'s 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, 19, 20, 27, and 29. The remaining 298 students were distributed among C.S.D.'s 6, 17, 20, and 21 and attended K-8 schools.

(a) Middle schools are either intermediate or junior high schools.

TABLE 4

Baseline Absence Rates of A.I.D.P. Students

District	Total Number of Targeted Students	Students Absent Between 24 and 74 Days in 1983-84		Students who were L.T.A. in 1983-84 (Absent 75+ Days)	
		n	Percent	n	Percent
1	515	367	71.3	71	13.8
2	398	235	59.0	49	12.3
3	642	283	44.1	53	8.3
4	383	125	32.6	32	8.4
5	380	242	63.7	91	23.9
6	1,880	789	42.0	107	5.7
7	548	305	55.7	46	8.4
8	3,483	2,713	77.9	240	6.9
9	1,124	456	40.6	73	6.5
10	1,528	904	59.2	140	9.2
11	669	290	43.3	48	7.2
12	190	102	53.7	23	12.1
13	393	222	56.5	38	9.7
14	737	433	58.8	159	21.6
15	774	406	52.5	33	4.3
16	256	121	47.3	46	18.0
17	5,311	2,757	51.9	81	1.5
18	812	201	24.8	27	3.3
19	280	134	47.9	34	12.1
20	1,784	720	40.4	129	7.2
21	386	234	60.6	44	11.4
22	985	417	42.3	38	3.9
23	719	512	71.2	101	14.0
24	1,148	576	50.2	78	6.8
25	651	395	60.7	31	4.8
26	327	85	26.0	24	7.3
27	515	336	65.2	66	12.8
28	694	342	49.3	30	4.3
29	2,424	911	37.6	55	2.3
30	688	188	27.3	20	2.9
31	1,058	428	40.5	33	3.1
32	605	328	54.2	38	6.3
Total	32,287	16,557	51.3	2,078	6.4

NOTE. Program guidelines recommended inclusion of students with at least 24 absences in 1983-84. This table does not include data for 4,056 students for whom attendance data were not reported and 9,596 students who were absent fewer than 24 days in 1983-84.

TABLE 5

Number of Overage A.I.D.P. Students
in Each Community School District

District	Total Number of Targeted Students	Students Overage for their Grade (a)	
		n	Percent
1	515	300	58.3
2	398	199	50.0
3	642	319	49.6
4	383	257	67.1
5	380	217	57.2
6	1,880	900	47.8
7	548	369	67.3
8	3,483	1,496	42.9
9	1,124	538	47.9
10	1,528	691	45.2
11	669	317	47.3
12	190	98	51.6
13	393	240	61.1
14	737	530	71.9
15	774	350	45.2
16	256	160	62.5
17	5,311	2,100	39.6
18	812	300	36.9
19	280	214	76.4
20	1,784	843	47.3
21	386	178	46.1
22	985	373	37.9
23	719	458	63.7
24	1,148	493	42.9
25	651	236	36.2
26	327	68	20.8
27	515	281	54.5
28	694	342	49.3
29	2,424	1,032	42.6
30	688	271	39.4
31	1,058	360	34.0
32	605	299	49.4
Total	32,287	14,829	45.9

(a) These students were overage for their grade by at least one year.

III. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

Prior to the 1984-85 school year, 22 of the 31 districts from which information was available provided limited attendance services. Most of these districts had attendance teachers (15 districts) and/or family outreach staff (eight districts). Nine districts had no formal attendance program before 1984-85. The A.I.D.P. Program enabled districts to develop and implement comprehensive programs to meet the needs of at-risk students. District staff reported that A.I.D.P. funds were used for the following services:

Attendance monitoring	(30 districts)
Family outreach	(30 districts)
Student counseling	(27 districts)
Referrals to outside agencies	(26 districts)
Supplementary educational services	(14 districts)
Career/vocational education	(14 districts)
Alternative schools/programs	(13 districts)
Automated dialing equipment	(6 districts)
Diagnostic screening	(5 districts)
Contractual services	(1 district)

In addition, many districts used A.I.D.P. funds to provide attendance incentives in their program. These often included awards, prizes, trips, or class parties.

The range of activities offered by the A.I.D.P. Program varied among districts. At the time of the initial visits by O.E.A. in October and November, 1984 a few districts offered a multidimensional intensive program to a limited number of students at selected sites. Others offered only a few types of services, but provided these to a sizeable proportion of students in their district. Between November, 1984 and

May, 1985 many districts modified their programs based on recommendations made by staff of the Office of Student Progress (O.S.P.), either by adding or subtracting services, or by reducing or expanding the number of targeted students.

Services were often provided in a framework that incorporated features of the strategies discussed below.

Attendance Outreach

In this type of intervention absent students are identified and their homes are contacted for the dual purpose of notifying parents who may not be aware of their child's absence, and to determine the reason for absence. Contacts are initiated by phone, letter, or home visit and the information gained from these contacts is then used to determine what follow-up measures are appropriate.

Teacher Ombudsman

This strategy increases students' involvement in school by establishing a caring and supportive relationship between the student and a teacher. A teacher is assigned a group of 10 to 15 students and gives them special attention on a daily basis in the form of individual or group counseling, instruction, and engagement activities before and after school. The teacher also acts as the student's advocate within the school.

Pupil Personnel Team

This strategy increases the availability of support services to at-risk students by promoting communication and coordinated efforts among personnel of various support programs in the school (e.g, Program Alternatives to Special Education, Substance Abuse Prevention, Chapter I),

and/or between staff of these programs and teaching and administrative staff. The team meets on a regular basis under the direction of a designated leader.

School-Community Agency Collaboration

This strategy requires collaboration between the school and one or more community-based service agencies to coordinate support services provided to at-risk students. These services often include medical, psychological, instructional, recreational, or other services that address the specific needs of students and their families.

In-school Suspension

In-school suspension is a type of alternative program in which students are assigned to an in-school guidance/instructional laboratory, rather than suspended from school. The lab serves as a closed educational setting and provides ongoing individualized instruction and intensive counseling for one to several weeks. At the end of this period, students return to their regular classes.

Family Outreach

The family outreach model addresses truancy and dropout problems by maintaining an active liaison between the school and the family using family assistants, neighborhood workers, and guidance staff for home visits and other parent involvement activities.

Work Study

This strategy emphasizes the relationship between education and the work setting. Motivation and attendance of at-risk students is encouraged by combining classroom instruction, career exploration, job prepa-

ration, and actual work experience. Students are placed in jobs after school for which they are paid. Their experiences on the job are used as the basis of classroom discussions.

Incentives

The incentive strategy reduces absenteeism and promotes school attendance by offering rewards for attendance on an individual, class, or group basis.

OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

O.E.A. field staff observed A.I.D.P. activities and interviewed program staff, principals, and district personnel to evaluate the implementation of specific program components. A summary of these findings follows.

Program Plan

Although flexible program guidelines permitted districts to develop or expand programs to meet the needs of their students, interpretive ambiguities led to delays in S.E.D. approval of district plans. These delays contributed to initial implementation difficulties in staffing, scheduling, and coordination. At the local level, some school staff also felt that, since they were familiar with the students and issues unique to their schools, they should have had greater involvement in district program planning.

Certain program designs and strategies more than others appeared to contribute to successful implementation of the A.I.D.P. Program. An essential element was a clearly defined procedure for selecting students which all staff understood and supported. A second important feature

was a multidisciplinary team approach exemplified by the pupil personnel team. Third, districts that chose to focus the program on a small number of students appeared to have a greater impact on participants (e.g., C.S.D. 12); however, the disadvantage of most narrowly focused programs was that because only a small group of students participated, overall school attendance rates were not significantly affected. Additional features of successful program strategies included active involvement by program administrators, regularly scheduled staff development activities for program and non-program staff members, internal program assessment activities, clearly defined procedures for immediate attendance follow-up, and effective use of incentives.

A major concern of many in the districts was the effort involved in getting the L.T.A. student to return to school. Many staff members felt that too much of their time had been directed at these students with too little success.

A key feature of the A.I.D.P. Program was individualized attention to students in the form of reduced class registers (one district), individual and small-group instruction (13 districts), and individual and group counseling activities (27 districts). Students seemed to respond well to individualized counseling and instruction, particularly when these activities were scheduled on a regular basis and when adequate follow-up was provided. In many districts, however, staff were overextended and able to see many students only on an infrequent or as-needed basis. Consequently, the focus of these sessions was often limited to crisis intervention rather than the systematic attainment of long-term goals.

Program Staffing

The A.I.D.P. Program supported staff responsible for attendance monitoring and outreach, family outreach, student counseling, and/or instruction. Program staff generally demonstrated a high degree of commitment, skill, and energy when serving at-risk students. However, a few cases were observed in which a staff member did not seem ideally suited to work with the students. (In one case for example, a family outreach worker was having trouble communicating with a student due to a language barrier.) A common lament of interviewees was insufficient staff or funded staff hours to provide adequate services to students. This was particularly true of counselors and of itinerant staff assigned to more than one site. Some staff members complained of caseloads that were too large to provide effective service to all targeted students.

Staff Orientation And Training

Many districts provided substantial staff development. Most program staff (37 of the 42 interviewed) reported that they were given an orientation to the A.I.D.P. Program at some point during fall, 1984. However, many districts did not have the full complement of A.I.D.P. staff at that time and subsequent orientations were often a piecemeal affair. As a result, some staff reported initial confusion about their A.I.D.P. responsibilities.

In addition to orientation, one-half of the staff members who were interviewed received some type of ongoing training. In many districts, training focused on issues such as suicide and substance abuse preven-

tion, teenage pregnancy, strategies to follow during a home visit, and the community and its resources. Although the majority of staff interviewed felt adequately prepared for the program, it was evident that many needed additional clarification, instruction, and support.

Attendance Monitoring and Outreach

The A.I.D.P. Program permitted districts to institute or expand attendance monitoring and outreach efforts to provide more immediate and effective contact with the homes of absent students. Of the 35 building principals or A.I.D.P. site coordinators who were interviewed, five reported that absent students' homes were contacted after one class period; 14 reported that homes were contacted after one day of absence; and four others reported that contact was initiated after three days. Four principals, however, indicated that contact was not initiated until at least a week of absence had elapsed. Contacts were initiated in some districts by a combination of A.I.D.P. and non-A.I.D.P. staff. Staff responsible for initial contacts included attendance teachers (18 districts), classroom teachers or teacher ombudsman (14 districts), family or community workers (22 districts), clerical staff (nine districts), principals (four districts), and guidance counselors (8 districts).

In all 31 districts, contact was initiated by means of a telephone call. Twenty-eight districts reported that these calls were followed by either a letter or home visit. Ten of the visited schools reported that an automated dialing system was used to make calls to students' homes during the evening hours when parents were more likely to answer.

Coordination

All principals and district coordinators reported that they encouraged A.I.D.P. staff to coordinate program activities informally among themselves and with staff of other school and community-based programs. However, many staff reported that their schedules did not allow time for follow up. This was especially true of itinerant staff (those assigned to two or more schools) and family workers (the bulk of whose time was spent outside of the school making home visits). Time shortages were also mentioned by teacher ombudsmen who had the dual responsibility of teaching regular subject classes and providing special attention before and after school to A.I.D.P. students. In some districts it appeared that staff did not know who was responsible for delegating follow up responsibilities.

In some districts, strong leadership exercised by A.I.D.P. coordinators and school administrators enhanced coordination of school and district support services. Effective coordination was particularly evident in districts with established pupil personnel teams.

MATCHING A.I.D.P. SERVICES TO STUDENT NEEDS

A.I.D.P. students could receive one or more of nine different services. Staff reported that 25,417 students (91.7 percent) of the students for whom service information was available were provided at least one service from the A.I.D.P. Program; a majority (16,199, or 58.4 percent) were given at least two services by the program.

Data both on reasons for selection and services received were available for 25,051 program students and are presented in Table 6.* More students received counseling than any other program service; 64.0 percent of the students were counseled on an individual or group basis. Appropriately, a larger proportion (83.9 percent) of students in the group selected because of behavior problems received counseling than students selected for other reasons. Family outreach efforts were directed to half of the students regardless of the reason for their selection. Direct instructional or educational services were provided to approximately one-third of the A.I.D.P. students. A larger percentage of students selected because of academic problems received educational services than of those selected for other reasons. Interestingly, however, a greater proportion of A.I.D.P. students with academic problems were given counseling (67.8 percent) than were given educational services (59.2 percent). One-quarter of the students' homes were contacted by an automated attendance monitoring device.

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* In addition to the students included in Table 6, 6,870 students were missing service information. Of the students in this group, service data were not reported for 4,559 students; 2,311 students in fact received no program services, 321 of whom were discharged before the end of the 1984-85 school year. No reason was given as to why the other 1,990 students did not receive services.

TABLE 6

Services Provided by Selection Category

Stated Reason for Selection	Total (a) N=25,051		Services Provided: Diagnostic Screening n=5,453	Counseling n=16,022	Educational Services n=8,342	Family Outreach n=13,608	Career/ Vocational Education n=2,439	Alternative Programs n=1,387	Automated Attendance Monitoring n=6,226	Outside Referral n=3,389	Contracted Services n=460
Attendance problem only	10,549	(n)	1,878	5,875	2,182	6,184	707	178	2,397	930	186
		(%)(b)	17.8	55.7	20.7	58.6	6.7	1.7	22.7	8.8	1.8
Attendance and one or more other reason	9,267	(n)	2,410	6,422	3,576	5,493	1,238	841	2,646	1,780	210
		(%)	26.0	69.3	38.6	59.3	13.4	9.1	28.6	19.2	2.3
Academic problem only	2,043	(n)	364	1,385	1,209	528	262	121	364	215	26
		(%)	17.8	67.8	59.2	25.8	12.8	5.9	17.8	10.5	1.3
Adjustment, behavioral problem only	973	(n)	159	816	282	393	68	58	220	128	9
		(%)	16.3	83.9	29.0	40.4	7.0	6.0	22.6	13.2	0.9
Health problem only	376	(n)	74	152	75	174	3	17	155	33	3
		(%)	19.7	40.4	19.9	46.3	0.8	4.5	41.2	8.8	0.8
Language difficulty only	158	(n)	15	45	80	31	3	51	12	8	0
		(%)	9.5	28.5	50.6	19.6	1.9	32.3	7.6	5.1	0.0
Overage for grade only	84	(n)	5	24	14	24	9	0	50	6	2
		(%)	6.0	28.6	16.7	28.6	10.7	0.0	59.5	7.1	2.4
Two or more non-attendance reasons	1,601	(n)	548	1,303	121	781	149	121	382	289	24
		(%)	34.2	81.4	7.6	48.8	9.3	7.6	23.9	18.1	1.5

(Footnotes on next page)

(Footnotes to Table 6)

NOTE. One or more services were reported to be provided to 25,417 (78.7 percent) of the 32,287 targeted students; 366 of these students could not be included in this table because the reason for their selection was not indicated. No services were reported given to 2,311 (7.2 percent) of the targeted students, and no information was reported about services provided to 4,559 (14.1 percent) of the students.

(a) The N is the total number of students selected for the reason indicated who received at least one A.I.D.P. service. The n is the total number of students who were provided with the service. The (n) is the total number of students selected for a given reason who were also provided with the indicated service.

(b) Percentages (%) are based on the proportion of students selected for a given reason (row total) who were provided with the specific service. Since students could be selected for more than one reason, percentages do not sum to 100.

IV. CHANGES IN ATTENDANCE RATES

OVERVIEW OF THE ANALYSES

The analyses in this chapter were computed on two different sets of data. The first analyses (Tables 7 through 14) are of changes from 1983-84 to 1984-85 in A.I.D.P. students' attendance. Data are reported for all students as well as separately by school level (elementary and middle). Additional analyses of changes in individual A.I.D.P. students attendance are reported for three subgroups: students with at least 24 days absence in 1983-84, students overage for their grade, and students who were L.T.A. in 1983-84. A second set of analyses (Tables 15 to 17) concern changes from 1983-84 to 1984-85 in aggregate, school-wide attendance in A.I.D.P. schools.

CHANGES IN A.I.D.P. STUDENTS' ATTENDANCE FROM 1983-84 TO 1984-85

Attendance of All A.I.D.P. Students

The overall average attendance rate of students targeted for A.I.D.P. remained essentially unchanged in 1983-84 and 1984-85; the percentages of attendance were 79.7 and 79.9, respectively. (See Table 7.) Average attendance of A.I.D.P. students increased in 10 districts, stayed the same in one, and decreased in the other 21 districts. Average rates of change ranged from a decrease of 9.2 percent (C.S.D. 4) to an increase of 11.2 percent (C.S.D. 12).

Elementary School Students. Overall, the average attendance rate of elementary school students increased 3.6 percentage points from 80.4 percent in 1983-84 to 84.0 percent in 1984-85. (See Table 8.) The average

TABLE 7

Changes in Attendance of All A.I.D.P. Students By District

District	Number of Students	Average Percentage of Attendance		
		1983-84	1984-85	Change
1	441	72.9	71.9	-1.0
2	361	75.9	74.3	-1.6
3	552	80.4	77.0	-3.4
4	215	71.8	62.6	-9.2
5	319	67.1	66.1	-1.0
6(a)	1,297	81.0	84.6	3.6
7	492	79.1	79.1	0.0
8	2,912	76.7	79.4	2.7
9(b)	399	66.9	65.6	-1.3
10	1,205	74.8	76.8	2.0
11	476	79.0	79.7	0.7
12(a)	112	71.7	82.8	11.1
13	299	74.8	74.1	-0.7
14	595	66.3	64.7	-1.6
15(a)	502	80.2	83.1	2.9
16	194	69.9	67.9	-2.0
17	4,017	84.0	86.2	2.2
18	691	88.2	91.0	2.8
19	244	76.3	77.8	1.5
20	1,319	80.5	78.4	-2.1
21	366	75.9	74.9	-1.0
22	917	85.1	81.7	-3.4
23	593	69.5	70.5	1.0
24	892	78.1	77.7	-0.4
25	599	81.6	80.9	-0.7
26	263	85.5	84.3	-1.2
27	446	74.1	70.2	-3.9
28(a)	452	81.4	79.8	-1.6
29(a)	1,589	86.5	84.6	-1.9
30	584	88.4	86.8	-1.6
31	907	84.5	81.8	-2.7
32	483	78.3	76.7	-1.6
Total	24,733	79.7	79.9	0.2

NOTE. The 24,733 students (76.6 percent of the target population) included in this and other tables that report changes in attendance of A.I.D.P. students are those with attendance data both years.

(a) Attendance data for both years were available for less than 70 percent of the target group.

(b) Attendance data for both years were available for less than 50 percent of the target group.

TABLE 8

Changes in Attendance of All Elementary School A.I.D.P. Students in Each District

District	Number of Students	Average Percentage of Attendance 1983-84	1984-85	Change
1	246	75.6	78.5	2.9
2	52	66.7	71.7	5.0
3	169	76.6	78.8	2.2
4	0	-	-	-
5	32	65.9	65.9	0.0
6	967	80.4	86.3	5.9
7	204	80.4	82.8	2.4
8	1,687	76.9	82.1	5.2
9	300	72.6	73.0	0.4
10	929	75.6	78.0	2.4
11	275	83.7	87.7	4.0
12	0	-	-	-
13	85	73.3	75.8	2.5
14	155	65.5	69.2	3.7
15	382	79.1	83.6	4.5
16	0	-	-	-
17	2,863	83.5	87.1	3.6
18	580	90.2	93.2	3.0
19	70	88.9	88.4	-0.5
20	511	87.9	88.5	0.6
21	0	-	-	-
22	0	-	-	-
23	51	83.7	87.7	4.0
24	385	74.9	82.9	8.0
25	48	80.4	81.5	1.1
26	102	91.3	92.4	1.1
27	0	-	-	-
28	150	79.6	82.1	2.5
29	288	83.2	86.5	3.3
30	0	-	-	-
31	0	-	-	-
32	407	78.9	79.2	0.3
Total	10,918	80.4	84.0	3.6

NOTE. The school level was not indicated for 512 students who had attendance data both years. As a result,the students reported in this table and Table 9 do not always sum to the number reported in Table 7. The general findings are not affected, with one exception: although the overall attendance rate increased in District 19 (when 35 students were included whose school level was not reported) it decreased for both elementary and middle school students whose school level was reported.

attendance rate of elementary school A.I.D.P. students increased in all but two of the 24 districts that had an elementary school program. The increase in attendance ranged from .3 (C.S.D. 32) to 8.0 percent (C.S.D. 24). Attendance rates stayed the same in one district (C.S.D. 5), and appeared to decline in one other (C.S.D. 19).*

Middle School Students. The average attendance rate of A.I.D.P. middle school students decreased 2.7 points overall from 79.1 percent in 1983-84 to 76.4 percent in 1984-85. (See Table 9.) Attendance rates of these students decreased in 29 of the 32 districts; the decreases ranged from .5 percent (C.S.D. 10 and 19) to 11.7 percent (C.S.D. 32). Attendance rates of middle school students increased in three districts (C.S.D. 12,** 18, and 23); these increases ranged from .7 to 11.1 percent.

The consistency of the finding that middle school A.I.D.P. students' attendance declined was further supported by an analysis of sixth graders' attendance. Half of these students were in the terminal grade of an elementary school (kindergarten through sixth grade); the other half were in the entry grade of an intermediate school (usually sixth through eighth or ninth grade). The attendance of elementary school sixth graders paralleled that of other students in their school; it increased

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* It should be noted, however, that C.S.D. 19's overall change in attendance was positive when analyses included an additional 35 students for whom school level was not reported. (Compare Table 7 with Tables 8 and 9.)

**In addition to possible program effects, C.S.D. 12's apparently large increase may be related to the following factors: the small number (190) of target students; a low (58.9 percent) and possibly biased rate of attendance data return; and a relatively high proportion of L.T.A. students (12.1 percent), who had the greatest room for improvement. (See Table 5.)

TABLE 9

Changes in Attendance of All Middle School A.I.D.P. Students in Each District

District	Number of Students	Average Percentage of Attendance 1983-84	1984-85	Change
1	195	69.5	63.6	-5.9
2	309	77.4	74.7	-2.7
3	383	82.0	76.2	-5.8
4	215	71.8	62.6	-9.2
5	269	67.2	64.9	-2.3
6	289	82.1	77.8	-4.3
7	288	78.2	76.4	-1.8
8	1,225	76.4	75.8	-0.6
9	99	49.7	42.9	-6.8
10	180	73.1	72.6	-0.5
11	182	73.5	69.3	-4.2
12	112	71.7	82.8	11.1
13	169	76.4	75.0	-1.4
14	440	66.5	63.0	-3.5
15	120	83.6	81.4	-2.2
16	194	69.9	67.9	-2.0
17	1,033	85.0	83.0	-2.0
18	111	77.6	79.2	1.6
19	139	72.7	72.2	-0.5
20	751	74.9	70.7	-4.2
21	310	73.8	73.2	-0.6
22	917	85.1	81.7	-3.4
23	542	68.1	68.8	.0.7
24	507	80.5	73.8	-6.7
25	551	81.7	80.9	-0.8
26	161	81.8	79.2	-2.6
27	442	74.1	70.2	-3.9
28	302	82.3	78.6	-3.7
29	1,301	87.3	84.2	-3.1
30	584	88.4	86.8	-1.6
31	907	84.5	81.8	-2.7
32	76	74.8	63.1	-11.7
Total	13,303	79.1	76.4	-2.7

NOTE. The school level was not indicated for 512 students who had attendance data both years. As a result, the number of students reported in this table and Table 8 do not always sum to the number reported in Table 7. The general findings are not affected, with one exception: although the overall attendance rate increased in C.S.D. 19 (when 35 students were included whose school level was not reported) it decreased for both elementary and middle school students whose school level was reported.

an average of 2.1 percentage points (from 82.4 to 84.5 percent). In contrast, the attendance of intermediate school sixth graders declined by 2.3 percentage points (from 83.4 to 81.1 percent).

Attendance of A.I.D.P. Students Absent 24 or More Days in 1983-84

Program guidelines recommended inclusion of students with at least 24 absences during the 1983-84 school year. Two-thirds of the students who were targeted for the program and who had attendance data available from both school years (and thus could be included in these analyses) met the criterion of 24 days absence in 1983-84. Analyses of changes in A.I.D.P. students' attendance were calculated on subsets of the population, categorized according to their 1983-84 attendance.

Elementary School Students. Changes in the attendance of students who met the recommended program guideline were more positive than changes among those absent fewer than 24 days in 1983-84. In every district, the increases were greater for elementary school students who had at least 24 absences (Table 10) than for the total district elementary school target population (Table 8). Overall, average attendance for these students increased six percent from 75.1 to 81.1 percent. The increases ranged from 1.2 (C.S.D. 7) to 11.1 percent (C.S.D. 8). No such increase was evident among the students absent fewer than 24 days; their 91.6 percent average attendance in 1983-84 was near the city-wide rate for their level and left little room for improvement.

Middle School Students. Overall, the average attendance rate of middle school students absent at least 24 days in 1983-84 declined .7 percentage points (from 71.6 to 70.9 percent), a decline that was less

TABLE 10

Changes in Attendance of Elementary School A.I.D.P. Students who were Absent at least 24 Days in 1983-84

District	Number of Students	Average Percentage of Attendance		
		1983-84	1984-85	Change
1	219	74.3	78.6	4.3
2	47	64.2	70.9	6.7
3	125	71.4	77.0	5.6
4	0	-	-	-
5	30	64.2	65.4	1.2
6	564	71.3	82.4	11.1
7	147	76.0	81.2	5.2
8	1,580	76.0	82.0	6.0
9	233	68.5	71.5	3.0
10	734	71.4	75.7	4.3
11	148	78.0	84.6	6.6
12	0	-	-	-
13	81	72.4	75.6	3.2
14	144	63.6	68.5	4.9
15	268	74.1	81.1	7.0
16	0	-	-	-
17	1,745	79.5	85.3	5.8
18	134	76.2	87.1	10.9
19	23	78.7	81.5	2.8
20	173	75.9	80.1	4.2
21	0	-	-	-
22	0	-	-	-
23	37	80.3	87.2	6.9
24	304	70.8	81.5	10.7
25	33	76.5	80.3	3.8
26	18	79.4	87.2	7.8
27	0	-	-	-
28	136	78.5	82.2	3.7
29	190	80.5	84.7	4.2
30	0	-	-	-
31	0	-	-	-
32	301	74.3	77.2	2.9
Total	7,414	75.1	81.1	6.0

NOTE. This table excludes 3,504 of the targeted A.I.D.P. elementary school students who had fewer than 24 absences in 1983-84. The attendance of these students was similar to city-wide school system statistics for elementary school students. Across the city, the attendance of elementary school students increased from 88.2 percent in 1983-84 to 89.0 percent in in 1984-85. The attendance of A.I.D.P. students with fewer than 24 absences in 1983-84 declined slightly from 91.6 percent in 1983-84 to 90.1 percent in 1984-85.

than that for the total middle school A.I.D.P. population. More districts showed improved attendance for these students than for their total middle school A.I.D.P. population. (See Table 11.) Whereas the overall attendance of the targeted middle school students improved in only three of the 32 districts (Table 9), an additional eight districts showed improved attendance among students absent at least 24 days.

Overage Students and Attendance

Baseline percentages of attendance, and the extent to which those rates changed from 1983-84 to 1984-85, were affected dramatically when a student was overage for his or her grade. Among elementary and middle school students, both attendance rates and changes in those rates decreased as age in relation to grade increased. (See Table 12.)

The proportion of overage students increased in each succeeding grade. With few exceptions, being overage for grade went hand-in-hand with poor attendance and with little improvement in that attendance. Among A.I.D.P. students, at least one-half (and sometimes many more) of the first- through fifth-grade students were on age or underage for their grade. In the sixth through eighth grades the reverse was true: at least one-half of the targeted students were one year or more overage for their grade.

Elementary School Students. Elementary school students on age for their grade had an attendance rate in 1983-84 that was 5.0 percentage points higher (81.4 percent) than those two or more years overage (76.4 percent) and showed more improvement (increases of 4.0 and 2.3 percent, respectively) during the project year. (Refer to Appendix A for a more detailed analysis of these data by grade.)

TABLE 11

Changes in Attendance of Middle School A.I.D.P. Students who were Absent at Least 24 Days in 1983-84

District	Number of Students	Average Percentage of Attendance		
		1983-84	1984-85	Change
1	174	66.8	63.3	-3.5
2	224	72.4	71.8	-0.6
3	197	70.9	67.2	-3.7
4	122	63.2	57.5	-5.7
5	256	66.0	64.6	-1.4
6	145	72.0	69.0	-3.0
7	176	68.8	72.0	-3.2
8	1,114	75.2	75.3	0.1
9	84	42.9	42.2	-0.7
10	159	70.8	72.9	2.1
11	146	69.2	67.3	-1.9
12	100	69.8	82.9	13.1
13	123	70.6	71.4	0.8
14	353	60.0	58.0	-2.0
15	48	68.1	65.9	-2.2
16	146	62.2	62.8	0.6
17	602	81.4	79.7	-1.7
18	86	74.1	77.2	3.1
19	109	67.7	69.2	1.5
20	525	67.9	65.5	-2.4
21	250	70.1	69.7	-0.4
22	432	76.3	74.2	-2.1
23	492	66.1	68.5	2.4
24	301	72.2	67.7	-4.5
25	371	78.3	78.3	0.0
26	83	71.0	70.5	-0.5
27	361	70.3	68.3	-2.0
28	144	70.6	69.0	-1.6
29	451	75.3	74.0	-1.3
30	178	75.4	76.8	1.4
31	427	75.5	75.7	0.2
32	55	68.3	60.8	-7.5
Total	8,434	71.6	70.9	-0.7

NOTE. This table excludes 4,869 of the targeted A.I.D.P. middle school students who had fewer than 24 absences in 1983-84. Those students showed a greater decrease (from 92.1 to 85.9 percent) than the students in the above table.

TABLE 12

Changes in Attendance of A.I.D.P. Students
Under-, On, or Overage for Their Grade (All Students)

School Level	Age in Relation to Grade	n	Average Percentage of Attendance 1983-84	1984-85	Change
Elementary	Underage	89	81.5	86.0	4.5
	On age	6,709	81.4	85.4	4.0
	One year overage	3,066	79.5	82.7	3.2
	Two or more years overage	882	76.4	78.7	2.3
	Total elementary	10,746	80.4	84.1	3.7
Middle	Underage	176	84.2	83.4	-0.8
	On age	5,824	83.7	81.8	-1.9
	One year overage	4,360	78.8	75.6	-3.2
	Two or more years overage	2,704	70.0	66.4	-3.6
	Total middle	13,064	79.2	76.6	-2.6

NOTE. The total number of students in this table (23,810) excludes those for whom either school level was not indicated or their age was not reported. As a result, the attendance data for the total group varies in each level by a small amount from that reported in other tables.

Middle School Students. The discrepancy was even more substantial among middle school students. Students on age for their grade had attendance in 1983-84 that was 13.7 percentage points (83.7 percent) above that of their grade cohorts who were two or more years older (70.0 percent). Moreover, greater decreases were obtained from overage than on-age middle school students: the attendance of middle school students who were on age for their grade decreased 1.9 percentage points compared with the decrease of 3.6 points among students who were overage by at least two years. Similar trends were obtained when the data were reanalyzed to exclude students who had fewer than 24 absences in 1983-84. (See Table 13.) It is important to note that the decrease in middle school students' attendance reported in Table 9 cannot be explained solely by the fact that so many of the students were overage. The attendance of middle school students on age for their grade also tended to decline, although not as much as that of overage students.

Attendance of A.I.D.P. Students Who Were L.T.A. in 1983-84

A small proportion of students targeted for the A.I.D.P. Program were L.T.A.'s in 1983-84. That is, they were absent 75 or more days (an attendance rate equivalent to 59.5 percent). In all but one of the districts the attendance of these students improved, sometimes substantially. Increases ranged from 4.5 (C.S.D. 16) to 46.8 percent (C.S.D. 12). (See Table 14.)

For several reasons, however, this finding should not be over-interpreted. First, statistical regression to the mean would predict some of this change. It also is likely that many schools included only former

TABLE 13

Changes in Attendance of A.I.D.P. Students Absent 24 or More Days in 1983-84 who were Under-, On, or Overage for Their Grade

School Level	Age in Relation to Grade	n	Average Percentage of Attendance 1983-84	1984-85	Change
Elementary	Underage	51	74.6	83.2	8.6
	On age	4,486	76.4	82.9	6.5
	One year overage	2,114	74.0	79.4	5.4
	Two or more years overage	611	69.8	74.8	5.0
	Total elementary	7,262	74.6	81.2	6.6
Middle	Underage	94	76.5	78.0	1.5
	On age	3,186	76.6	77.0	0.4
	One year overage	2,843	71.8	70.6	-1.2
	Two or more years overage	2,125	64.2	62.4	-1.8
	Total middle	8,248	71.7	71.0	-0.7

NOTE. The total number of students indicated here excludes those whose age was unavailable or who were in a combined elementary/middle school (K-8).

TABLE 14

Changes in Attendance of Long-Term Absentee (L.T.A.) Students from 1983-84 to 1984-85 (A.I.D.P. Schools)

District	Number of Students	Average Percentage of Attendance		
		1983-84	1984-85	Change
1	70	42.6	52.7	10.1
2	47	39.8	54.0	14.2
3	52	38.4	53.0	14.6
4	30	36.1	42.7	6.6
5	90	38.5	46.2	7.7
6	94	41.5	70.1	28.6
7	44	46.1	66.0	19.9
8	236	42.7	57.9	15.2
9	70	33.9	44.6	10.7
10	140	44.7	60.8	16.1
11	45	40.1	49.5	9.4
12	23	32.6	79.4	46.8
13	35	35.2	52.9	17.7
14	159	36.1	44.2	8.1
15	33	40.9	55.8	14.9
16	45	36.4	40.9	4.5
17	79	39.4	70.7	31.3
18	27	43.4	71.2	27.8
19	34	37.2	54.2	17.0
20	128	36.0	51.5	15.5
21	44	41.5	48.9	7.4
22	37	47.6	47.2	-0.4
23	98	37.6	53.6	16.0
24	71	42.2	59.1	16.9
25	30	47.1	59.4	12.3
26	19	45.2	65.7	20.5
27	64	41.5	48.6	7.1
28	28	42.3	61.2	18.9
29	48	44.9	57.5	12.6
30	19	39.8	65.3	25.5
31	32	39.3	53.4	14.1
32	37	44.1	61.6	17.5
Total	2,008	40.3	55.3	15.0

NOTE. A student is an L.T.A. if absent 75 or more days in 1983-84. This is equivalent to an attendance rate of 59.5 percent or less. The 1984-85 attendance data was missing for 70 of the L.T.A. students.

L.T.A. students who were actually coming to school in 1984-85. The attendance of L.T.A. students increased to the 59.5 percent threshold in only ten of the districts; the average L.T.A. student targeted for A.I.D.P. in the other 23 districts did not exceed this threshold in 1984-85.

SCHOOL-WIDE ATTENDANCE IN A.I.D.P. SCHOOLS

The analyses reported in Tables 7 through 14 include only students targeted for the A.I.D.P. Program. Analyses were also conducted on aggregate data supplied by Student Information Services (S.I.S.) for all students in each of the 376 A.I.D.P. schools. These analyses were conducted to determine the impact of attendance efforts (including A.I.D.P.) on overall school attendance. Tables 15 through 17 present these data. In A.I.D.P. schools, attendance of all students increased .8 percentage points from 85.3 to 86.1. (See Table 15.)

Elementary Schools

The increase in aggregate school attendance was evident in every district that included elementary schools in its program. Overall, A.I.D.P. elementary schools increased their attendance .9 percentage points from 86.9 to 87.8. (See Table 16.)

Middle Schools

Middle schools in only three districts increased the attendance of their A.I.D.P. students. (See Table 9.) In contrast, 21 districts obtained increases in the aggregate attendance of the full student population in their A.I.D.P. schools. (See Table 17.)

TABLE 15

Changes in Attendance from 1983-84 to 1984-85 in All A.I.D.P. Schools

District	1983-84 Average School Register	1983-84 Percentage of Attendance	1984-85 Average School Register	1984-85 Percentage of Attendance	Change
1	615	83.4	625	84.2	0.8
2	835	88.0	858	87.8	-0.2
3	571	83.9	574	84.6	0.7
4	1,167	81.8	1,103	80.7	-1.1
5	723	83.5	731	83.6	0.1
6	1,355	87.9	1,363	88.4	0.5
7	627	83.6	637	84.1	0.5
8	752	84.8	743	85.9	1.1
9	851	82.7	857	84.3	1.6
10	1,114	83.9	1,155	85.9	2.0
11	983	87.9	1,002	89.7	1.8
12	766	77.3	759	76.2	-1.1
13	710	84.6	702	85.1	0.5
14	792	84.7	788	86.0	1.3
15	804	85.3	803	88.7	3.4
16	820	77.9	788	77.2	-0.7
17	1,210	86.9	1,171	88.2	1.3
18	1,087	88.9	1,090	89.8	0.9
19	961	84.9	994	85.9	1.0
20	810	87.2	808	89.2	2.0
21	919	83.7	892	85.0	1.3
22	1,202	87.4	1,179	88.5	1.1
23	795	80.8	774	82.0	1.2
24	1,167	89.1	1,181	90.3	1.2
25	799	91.2	789	92.3	1.1
26	580	90.8	582	92.0	1.2
27	1,324	83.4	1,265	84.4	1.0
28	943	86.1	943	87.0	0.9
29	1,029	88.8	1,007	89.0	0.2
30	1,200	85.5	1,177	86.7	1.2
31	1,327	88.8	1,218	90.2	1.4
32	1,195	84.5	1,175	85.2	0.7
All schools	895	85.3	887	86.1	0.8

NOTE. The attendance data reported in this table came from aggregate school attendance data supplied by Student Information Services (S.I.S.).

TABLE 16

Changes in Attendance from 1983-84 to 1984-85 in All A.I.D.P. Elementary Schools

District	1983-84 Average School Register	1983-84 Percentage of Attendance	1984-85 Average School Register	1984-85 Percentage of Attendance	Change
1	485	83.6	501	83.8	0.2
2	435	83.4	419	85.3	1.9
3	424	85.8	427	86.3	0.5
4(a)	-	-	-	-	-
5	629	83.7	707	84.0	0.3
6	1,454	88.8	1,457	89.9	1.1
7	627	85.0	628	86.5	1.5
8	685	86.1	687	88.0	1.9
9	787	83.0	794	84.8	1.8
10	1,114	84.9	1,175	86.6	1.7
11	862	89.4	893	91.4	2.0
12(a)	-	-	-	-	-
13	674	85.7	659	86.8	1.1
14	750	86.7	747	87.8	1.1
15	639	87.3	658	88.2	0.9
16(a)	-	-	-	-	-
17	1,144	88.4	1,160	89.5	1.1
18	1,066	89.7	1,114	91.0	1.3
19	897	87.7	891	88.3	0.6
20	695	89.0	697	90.8	1.8
21	686	86.8	676	88.2	1.4
22(a)	-	-	-	-	-
23	624	83.0	614	85.3	2.3
24	1,022	90.0	1,034	91.5	1.5
25	686	92.3	692	93.4	1.1
26	476	92.2	492	93.5	1.3
27(a)	-	-	-	-	-
28	826	86.7	799	89.1	2.4
29	771	88.8	780	89.7	0.9
30(a)	-	-	-	-	-
31(a)	-	-	-	-	-
32	1,402	86.9	1,340	87.8	0.9
All schools	794	86.9	802	87.8	0.9

(a) These districts did not have an A.I.D.P. program in their elementary schools.

TABLE 17

Changes in Attendance from 1983-84 to 1984-85
in All A.I.D.P. Middle Schools

District	1983-84 Average School Register	1983-84 Percentage of Attendance	1984-85 Average School Register	1984-85 Percentage of Attendance	Change
1	810	83.4	810	84.2	0.8
2	1,053	88.9	1,077	88.3	-0.6
3	827	82.2	832	83.1	0.9
4	1,167	81.8	1,103	80.7	-1.1
5	840	83.3	761	83.2	-0.1
6	1,082	84.8	1,105	83.2	-1.6
7	628	81.7	650	81.0	-0.7
8	886	82.7	856	82.5	-0.2
9	1,020	82.2	1,021	83.2	1.0
10	1,114	81.0	1,094	83.6	2.6
11	1,268	85.6	1,246	86.9	1.3
12	766	77.3	759	76.2	-1.1
13	817	81.7	831	81.2	-0.5
14	856	82.2	849	83.6	1.4
15	1,052	83.4	1,021	85.3	1.9
16	820	77.9	788	77.2	-0.7
17	1,421	82.9	980	83.2	0.3
18	1,104	88.2	1,071	88.8	0.6
19	1,067	81.0	1,033	82.3	1.3
20	1,232	83.6	1,215	85.6	2.0
21	1,012	82.9	978	84.0	1.1
22	1,202	87.4	1,179	88.5	1.1
23	880	80.0	854	80.9	0.9
24	1,571	87.4	1,592	88.3	0.9
25	1,111	89.4	1,055	90.3	0.9
26	866	88.6	830	89.6	1.0
27	1,324	83.4	1,265	84.4	1.0
28	1,059	85.7	1,087	85.5	-0.2
29	1,286	88.8	1,233	88.6	-0.2
30	1,200	85.5	1,177	86.7	1.2
31	1,325	88.8	1,218	90.2	1.4
32	885	78.7	928	79.6	0.9
All schools	1,048	83.8	1,016	84.4	0.6

V. ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

PATTERNS OF ATTENDANCE

This report has a two-fold purpose: to review the implementation of the 1984-85 A.I.D.P. Program and to analyze changes in attendance of program participants and schools. Analyses of attendance yielded several findings.

- The average attendance of elementary school students included in the program improved in all but one district. The overall gain from 1983-84 to 1984-85 was 3.6 percentage points (from 80.4 to 84.0).

- In contrast to elementary students, the attendance of A.I.D.P. pupils in middle schools declined an average of 2.7 points (from 79.1 to 76.4 percent). Decreases occurred in all but three of the 32 community school districts.

- Aggregate attendance of all students in A.I.D.P. schools improved from 1983-84 in both elementary (.9 points) and middle schools (.6 points). The increase in elementary A.I.D.P. schools parallels that of elementary A.I.D.P. target students; the increase in A.I.D.P. middle schools contrasts with the decrease in the attendance of A.I.D.P. middle school students.

- Sixth-grade A.I.D.P. students' attendance varied as a function of of the school level in which they were enrolled: the attendance of those in elementary schools (often in the terminal grade) appeared to improve; the attendance of those in middle schools (often in the entry grade) tended to decline.

- Students overage for their grade showed greater declines in attendance than those of both their age and grade peers. This was especially true among middle school students. However, the inclusion of overage students does not explain the decline in middle school students' attendance, since students on-age for their grade also had attendance in 1984-85 that was poorer than the prior school year.

- L.T.A. students showed the greatest gains of any subgroup analyzed. However, their average attendance in 1984-85 was still below that which defines a student as a long-term absentee (59.5 percent).

These and other findings suggest a number of issues that need to be examined during future planning of this program. These concerns are the focus of this final chapter. Some have been taken into account in the 1985-86 program guidelines that were issued prior to preparation of this report. Others remain to be addressed.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Program Plan

Districts and schools need to make attendance improvement a matter of school policy, drawing upon all available resources within the school, district, and community. Program planning should begin before the school year and involve input from on-site staff, parents, and students whenever possible. Guidelines should be made clear to all personnel responsible for program planning. Once proposals are submitted, state approval should follow as soon as possible. In 1985-86, district plans are expected to include the following:

- provision for individualized attention to at-risk students in the form of teacher-mentor or guidance activities;
- a concentration of different services by a variety of staff (e.g., pupil personnel team); and
- educational supports such as career education or after-school remediation and enrichment classes.

In addition, clear procedures for prompt follow up of student absentees need to be established. Also, staff development activities should be scheduled regularly for program staff.

Program Staffing

Since the success of any program is largely dependent on the competence and availability of the staff responsible for it, careful attention should be paid to the selection and assignment of staff. The A.I.D.P. district coordinator should have both management and leadership skills as well as experience in guidance and family outreach. Teaching, guidance, and family outreach staff selected to work directly with at-risk students and their families should be approved by the principal at the school site, and should exhibit the following characteristics:

- a high level of energy and enthusiasm and a genuine interest in working with at-risk students;
- excellent attendance record;
- work history of at least one year at the school site and positive rapport with other on-site staff members;
- knowledge of the community and its resources;
- willingness to adapt schedules in order to deal with crisis situations; and
- fluency in the language of the students and their families.

At least one staff member should be assigned at each school to coordinate program activities and arrange for follow-up, and should be funded to do so.* Guidelines for 1985-86 call for funding 40 percent of one school staff member's time for this purpose.

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* The designation of a full-time school-based coordinator was a major asset to the 1984-85 Project Connect Program (see the O.E.A. interim evaluation report, August, 1985) which served as a pilot for A.I.D.P.

Staff Orientation and Training

The district A.I.D.P. coordinator should provide an orientation to all A.I.D.P. staff early in the school year. Districts that have different program strategies operating at various sites may need to schedule additional orientations conducted by a designated site coordinator. Orientation should cover the following:

- procedures for identification of target students;
- definitions of goals and objectives for target students, and procedures and strategies to achieve those goals and objectives;
- delineation of roles and responsibilities of all A.I.D.P. staff members;
- coordination among and between A.I.D.P. personnel and other school-based staff (e.g., attendance staff, classroom teachers, staff of other special programs) and community agencies; and
- procedures for the assessment of program efforts by all involved staff.

Ongoing staff training should be provided to A.I.D.P. staff as well as other staff serving at-risk students. Training should focus on issues relevant to the achievement of program objectives such as effective counseling techniques, strategies to follow during home visits, and the development of awareness of the community and its resources. Training sessions and workshops should also allow staff to share information about students, develop program strategies, and coordinate activities. Staff of at least one district suggested that an additional city-wide staff training program be instituted which would deal with issues such as teenage pregnancy, sex and health education, drug abuse prevention, family crisis intervention, and suicide prevention. Coordination should be encouraged between the A.I.D.P. program and others (e.g., Family

Living Sex Education Curriculum, Substance Abuse Prevention Program) designed to deal with these specific concerns.

Student Selection

In addition to criteria outlined by the State Education Department, students with good attendance histories who have emerging attendance problems in 1985-86 should also be selected for the program. This would include students with an illness, family crisis, decline in academic achievement, declining or acting-out classroom behavior, class cutting, or chronic tardiness.*

Other students who should continue to be given special consideration are those who are one or more years overage for their grade. Overage students, particularly those in middle schools, are rapidly approaching the age at which they can legally drop out of school. Since most of them lack the skills necessary for vocational and professional success, it is likely they will have serious problems in their lives unless there is some type of successful intervention at this point.

A third group of at-risk students are new middle school entrants (usually sixth graders in intermediate schools, seventh graders in junior high schools). These students who have the added pressure of adjusting to a new school environment and are not yet known by instructional or guidance staff, may be especially prone to develop feelings of alienation and anxiety about school.

* In 1985-86, program eligibility has been expanded in several ways, one of which is that students absent ten or more days in September and October may be included. Also, up to ten percent of the 1985-86 target population may consist of students regardless of attendance, if they are characterized by two or more of the following: reading test score below grade, two or more subject failures, overage, and 20 or more days late.

Two groups included in the 1984-85 program have been excluded in plans for 1985-86; these are L.T.A. students (unless present for at least 10 days in September and October, 1985) and elementary school students. Although A.I.D.P. students who had been L.T.A.'s in 1983-84 showed greater attendance gains than any other group (Table 14), the average 1983-84 L.T.A. student who participated in the A.I.D.P. Program was still absent more than 75 days in 1984-85. Some staff indicated that the efforts they made to reach these students detracted from their work with other program students. Largely for that reason, they were excluded from the 1985-86 A.I.D.P. Program. Further study of their needs is necessary. Program strategies that might be considered for L.T.A. students are those that provide extensive individualized attention in an alternative education setting, in conjunction with incentives and attendance outreach.

In view of the fact that the A.I.D.P. Program appeared to increase elementary school students' attendance, early intervention may be key to attendance improvement and dropout prevention. If good attendance patterns are established early in a child's school career they may be more likely to continue. Clearly, however, middle school students need further attention and intensive intervention before their attendance objectives are achieved. (Plans for the 1985-86 A.I.D.P. Program in the community school districts have adopted an exclusive focus on the middle schools.)

Coordination

The reach of any program can be expanded when it links with other related programs and staff. To accomplish this, 1985-86 guidelines call

for pupil personnel teams consisting of both A.I.D.P. and non-A.I.D.P. staff which are responsible for coordinating services provided to at-risk students. Also, monthly service summaries will be prepared for each student to help staff coordinate plans and needed follow-up. Coordination between and among A.I.D.P. staff and other school-based programs also would be enhanced through:

- maintaining clear lines of communication between on-site, district, and central personnel;
- scheduling meetings and workshops at which staff can share ideas, develop strategies, and support each other in their efforts to serve at-risk students;
- planning for direct articulation between staff serving at-risk students entering middle school from elementary school, or entering high school from middle school; and
- coordinating with the Bureau of Attendance to provide speedier follow-up of absentee reports.

Attendance Monitoring and Outreach

The purpose of attendance outreach efforts such as telephone calls, letters, and home visits is three-fold: to notify parents of a student's absence, to determine the reason for absence, and to coordinate this information with appropriate follow-up measures. Revised guidelines for 1985-86 provide for several critical features. For example, funding was provided for adequate staff for the immediate identification and follow-up of absent students. In addition to these efforts, the effectiveness of attendance outreach may be increased by the following suggestions:

- Programs should be discouraged from having separate staff for attendance record-keeping and follow-up.
- Students' homes should be contacted the first day that the child is not in school.

- Telephone calls and home visits should be made, whenever possible, by a staff member with whom the student has an established relationship (e.g., teacher ombudsman).

- When the initial home contact is unsuccessful at returning the child to school, an immediate alternate plan should be pursued. For example, siblings and friends could be recruited to locate absentees and encourage them to return to school. Counseling and class- or school-based incentives could be used to encourage peers' support.

- Class cutting should be monitored and followed up on a regular basis.

FOCUS OF FUTURE EVALUATIONS

Numerous issues that have been raised in this report warrant further study. A number of concerns have been addressed by revisions to the guidelines for the 1985-86 program. The efficacy of these revisions ought to be assessed in future evaluations. Specific issues that need to be addressed include the following:

- What indicators reliably predict future chronic truancy?

- What is the length of intervention needed to sustain improved attendance of at-risk students?

- What needs do L.T.A. students have that are not being addressed by this program? Given that these may well be the students most at risk of dropping out, is a triage strategy an appropriate approach for A.I.D.P.?

- How can communication between middle and high schools be improved to ease the transition of new school entrants? What incentives can be provided to high schools which would enhance their linkages with middle schools and encourage them to reach out to entering at-risk students?

- What incentives exist for non-program staff to support attendance improvement?

- Once returned to school, do at-risk students also attend classes regularly? What procedures are useful for monitoring cutting and ensuring that students benefit from instruction?

- With improved attendance, is there a concomitant increase in students' achievement?

Evaluation of this program in 1985-86 will examine these concerns, study student selection in greater depth, and review the adequacy of program plans designed to meet at-risk students' needs.

APPENDIX

Changes in Attendance of Under-, On-, and Overage A.I.D.P. Students in First Through Ninth Grades (All Students)

Grade	Year	Percentage of Attendance				
		All Students(a)	Underage Students	On-age Students	Students One year Overage	Students Two or More Years Overage
First	1983-84	75.6	68.0	76.4	72.6	71.9
	1984-85	83.0	84.9	83.7	80.6	76.6
	(n)	(1,651)	(4)	(1,301)	(304)	(42)
Second	1983-84	79.7	76.7	81.2	76.9	71.7
	1984-85	83.9	86.8	85.4	80.4	77.6
	(n)	(2,094)	(12)	(1,489)	(516)	(77)
Third	1983-84	81.2	81.7	82.6	79.4	72.8
	1984-85	84.1	86.0	85.5	82.4	75.0
	(n)	(1,884)	(16)	(1,206)	(569)	(93)
Fourth	1983-84	82.5	84.7	83.9	81.5	78.8
	1984-85	85.3	88.2	86.8	84.4	81.1
	(n)	(2,100)	(23)	(1,149)	(672)	(256)
Fifth	1983-84	82.2	84.5	83.7	81.8	76.6
	1984-85	84.5	88.1	86.4	84.1	77.4
	(n)	(1,843)	(14)	(1,021)	(572)	(236)
Sixth(b)	1983-84	83.0	83.8	85.0	82.9	77.9
	1984-85	83.0	83.3	85.7	82.4	76.4
	(n)	(2,484)	(28)	(1,203)	(821)	(432)
Seventh	1983-84	79.5	87.1	84.5	80.4	71.1
	1984-85	76.5	88.0	82.3	76.8	67.7
	(n)	(4,781)	(37)	(1,853)	(1,567)	(1,324)
Eighth	1983-84	78.2	82.6	83.5	77.6	66.5
	1984-85	76.1	83.2	81.9	74.9	63.6
	(n)	(5,576)	(65)	(2,533)	(1,928)	(1,050)
Ninth	1983-84	78.1	83.8	81.3	75.7	68.6
	1984-85	75.2	80.0	78.8	72.4	65.0
	(n)	(1,733)	(72)	(866)	(626)	(169)
TOTAL	1983-84	79.8	83.4	82.6	79.1	71.4
	1984-85	80.0	84.1	83.9	78.6	69.4
	(N)	(24,146)	(271)	(12,621)	(7,575)	(3,679)

(a) The total number of students in this table does not include students whose age or grade was not available.

(b) Roughly half (1,253) of the sixth-grade students are in elementary schools; the others (1,184) are in middle schools or in a K-8 school (47 students).